

District Support for Continuous Improvement

District-Focused School Improvement

While much research in the past two decades has focused on school improvement, only recently has there been a movement to focus on the district role in school improvement planning. Though many districts and agencies across Wisconsin have school improvement planning policies, resources, and tools, there is often little focus on examining the district's direct role in improving student performance.

The *Characteristics of Successful Districts* is designed to assess effective district support, differentiated for its low-performing schools. Built into these rubrics is the idea that no “one-size-fits-all” policy or program can impact school and student achievement, especially in those schools with the greatest needs.

These research-driven rubrics allow districts to focus not only on school improvement planning, but on other aspects of district practice that influence school and student performance. The application of these Characteristics through a district self-assessment helps districts examine how effectively their district culture, leadership, data systems, professional development models, and support of curriculum and instructional practices impact school achievement. While the Characteristics address these critical areas of district functioning, they also focus on other relevant relationships, programs, and policies that a district designs and implements to effectively support its schools.

